



Art, Drama and Music Therapy Career Choice Factsheet

Background

This study forms part of a wider project between Health Education England and the University of Winchester exploring Allied Health Professions (AHP) career choices.

An online questionnaire was disseminated to current AHP students in England (undergraduate and postgraduate) for four weeks between February and March 2021. The aim was to explore and understand key motivations, sources of influence and barriers to choosing their specific profession.

The information and findings from the questionnaire will be shared via profession specific factsheets to help shape targeted careers information and guidance. This factsheet focuses on Art, Drama and Music therapy as a career of choice.

Art, Drama and Music therapy student population in England

In 2020/2021 there were approximately 107 active students on art, drama and music therapy courses in England. In 2021/2022 this has risen to approximately 141 active students.

Survey sample

- 41 art, drama and music therapy students completed the questionnaire. 24 studied art therapy, 3 drama therapy and 14 music therapy. Due to the small sample in each profession for the purpose of this factsheet the three professions have been combined. This represents 38% of the student population in 2020/2021
- 82.9% of participants were female and 17.1% were male.
- This finding compares well with national statistics from NHS England, who found that females comprised 81% of the number of qualified art, drama and music therapists working for the NHS in England in August 2021 with 19% male (NHS Digital, 2021).

Ethnicity

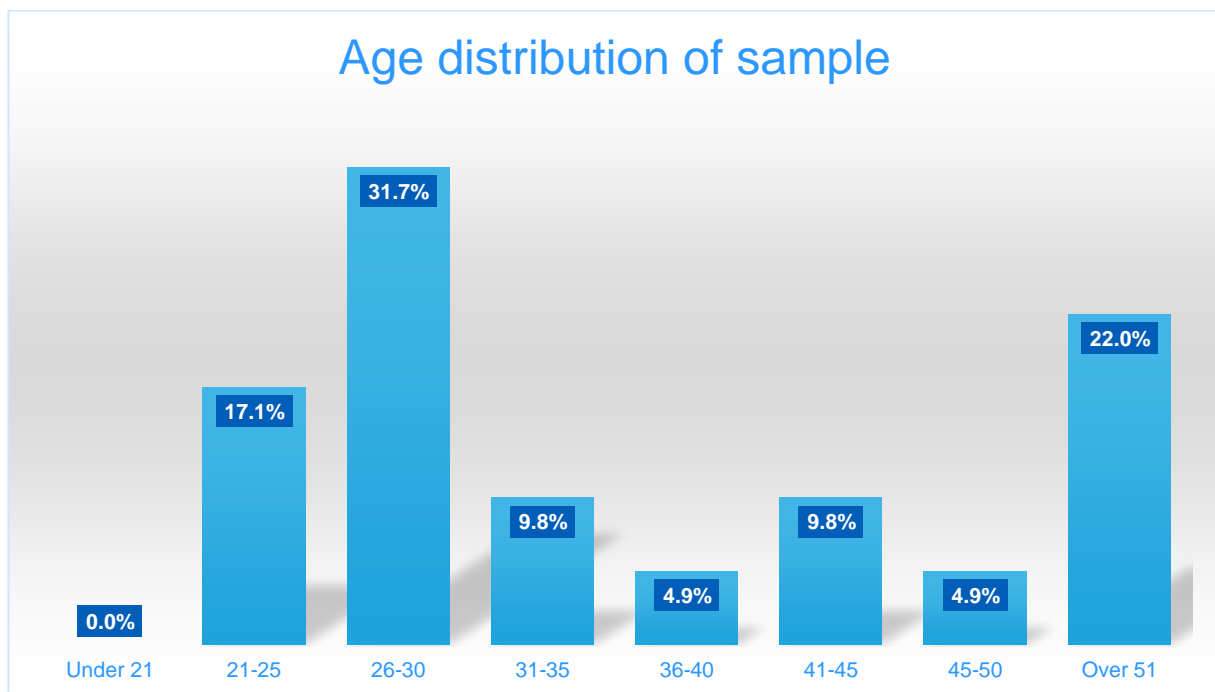
Ethnicity	Percentage of sample
White background	82.9%
Mixed or multiple ethnic background	7.2%
Asian background	4.8%
Black, African and Caribbean background	4.8%

Art, Drama and Music therapist Career Choices Factsheet

The findings from our sample (shown in the table above) are close to those from NHS England, who found that individuals from a white background comprised 88% of the number of qualified art, drama and music therapist for the NHS in England in August 2021 (NHS Digital, 2021). There were no participants from Arab or 'other' background.

Age and stage at which participants made the decision to become an art, drama or music therapist

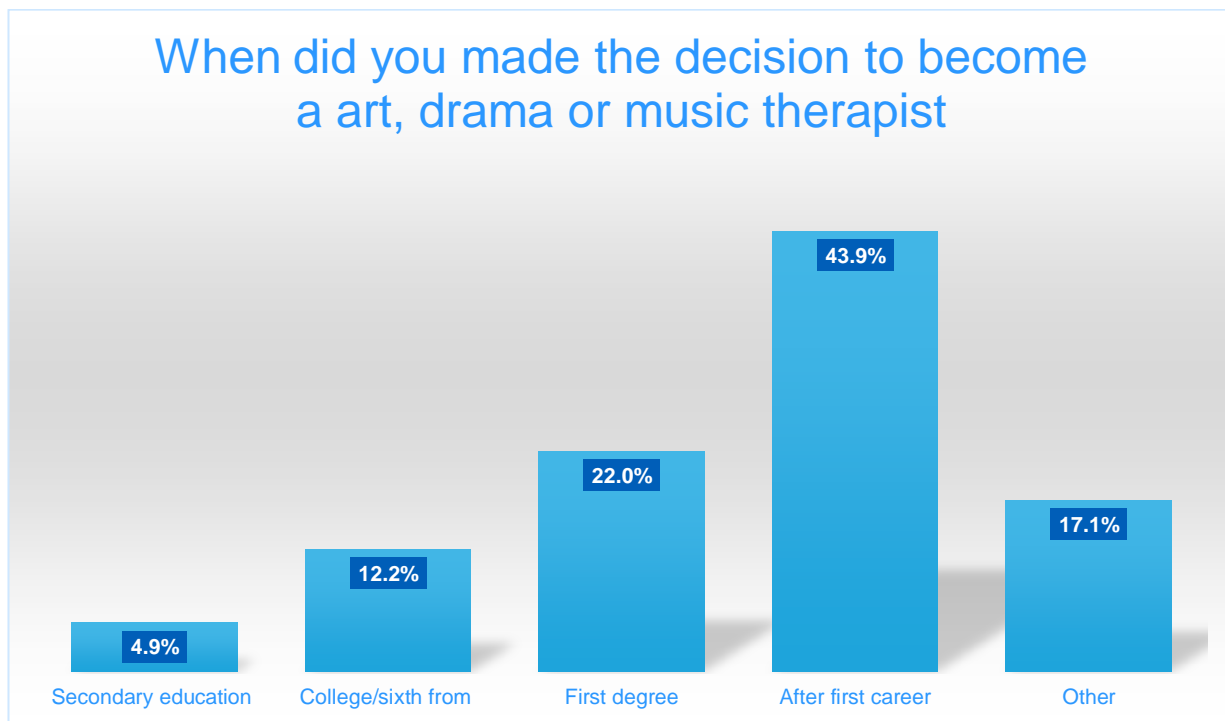
- In our sample, only 17.1% of students were under 25 years of age and no students were under the age of 21 years. Please note art, drama and music courses are only available at postgraduate level and courses are self-funded.
- 36.6% of the sample were over 40 years of age, with 22% being over 51 years of age.



Very few of the sample had chosen this profession during their school education (17.1%). As only available at postgraduate level, learners are not able to access courses via university clearing. .

Close to a quarter of the sample (22%) had chosen to become art, drama or music therapists during their first degree. The majority of the sample (61%) had made the decision after their first career or at other stages.

Art, Drama and Music therapist Career Choices Factsheet



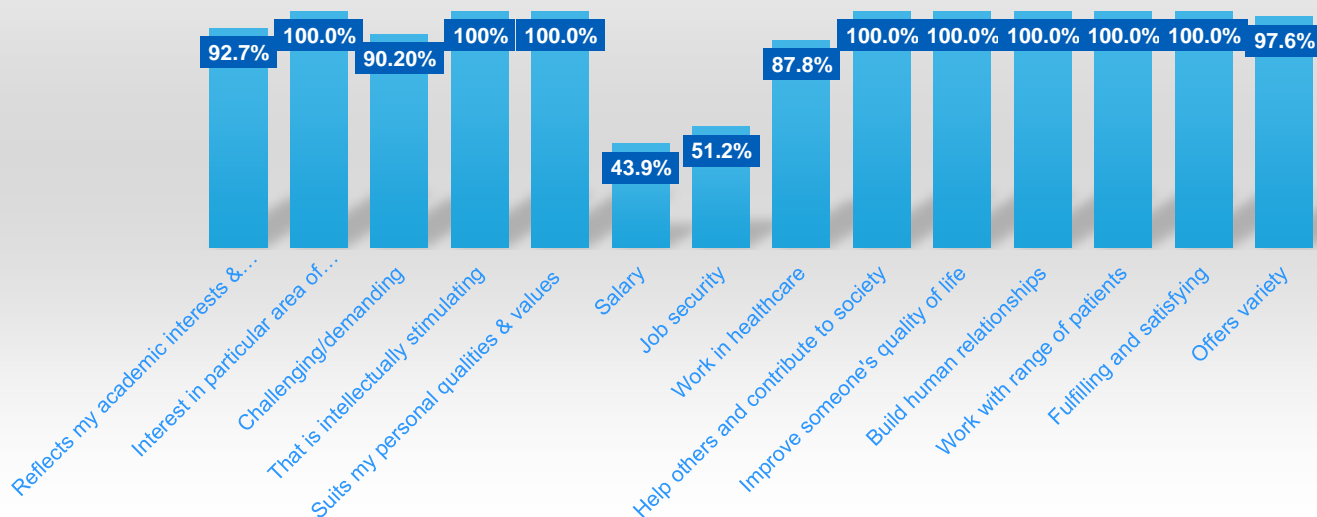
Motivations

Participants were asked to what extent different motivations impacted their art, drama or music therapy career choice.

- The most commonly cited motivations are shown in figure below.
- As seen from the figure altruistic reasons scored highly for choosing a career in art, drama or music.
- The perception of the nature and variety associated of the job was also important for a large percentage of the sample, e.g. choosing a job which 'offers variety' (97.6%), allows for 'working with a range of patients' (100%). It was less important for the participants whether the profession had 'a good public image and prestige' (46.3%) or the future 'job security' (51.2%). Only 43.9% agreed or strongly agreed that salary was a motivating factor.
- Choosing a career which 'reflects academic interest and abilities' (92.7%), 'interest in a particular area of the profession' (100%) and is 'intellectually stimulating' (100%) was an important motivation.
- Participants were asked about the influence of the opportunity to work in the public and private sector. 73.2% were motivated by working in the public sector compared to 51.2% by the private. 87.9% were influenced by working in healthcare, however only 65.9% answered that working in the NHS had had an influence. The noticeably higher motivation to work in the public sector more generally, may be due to an unawareness of the scope of the role of art, drama and music therapists within the NHS, but also there being relatively few roles for these professions within the NHS.

Art, Drama and Music therapist Career Choices Factsheet

Motivations for choosing an art, drama or music therapy career (% of the sample who agreed/strongly agreed)

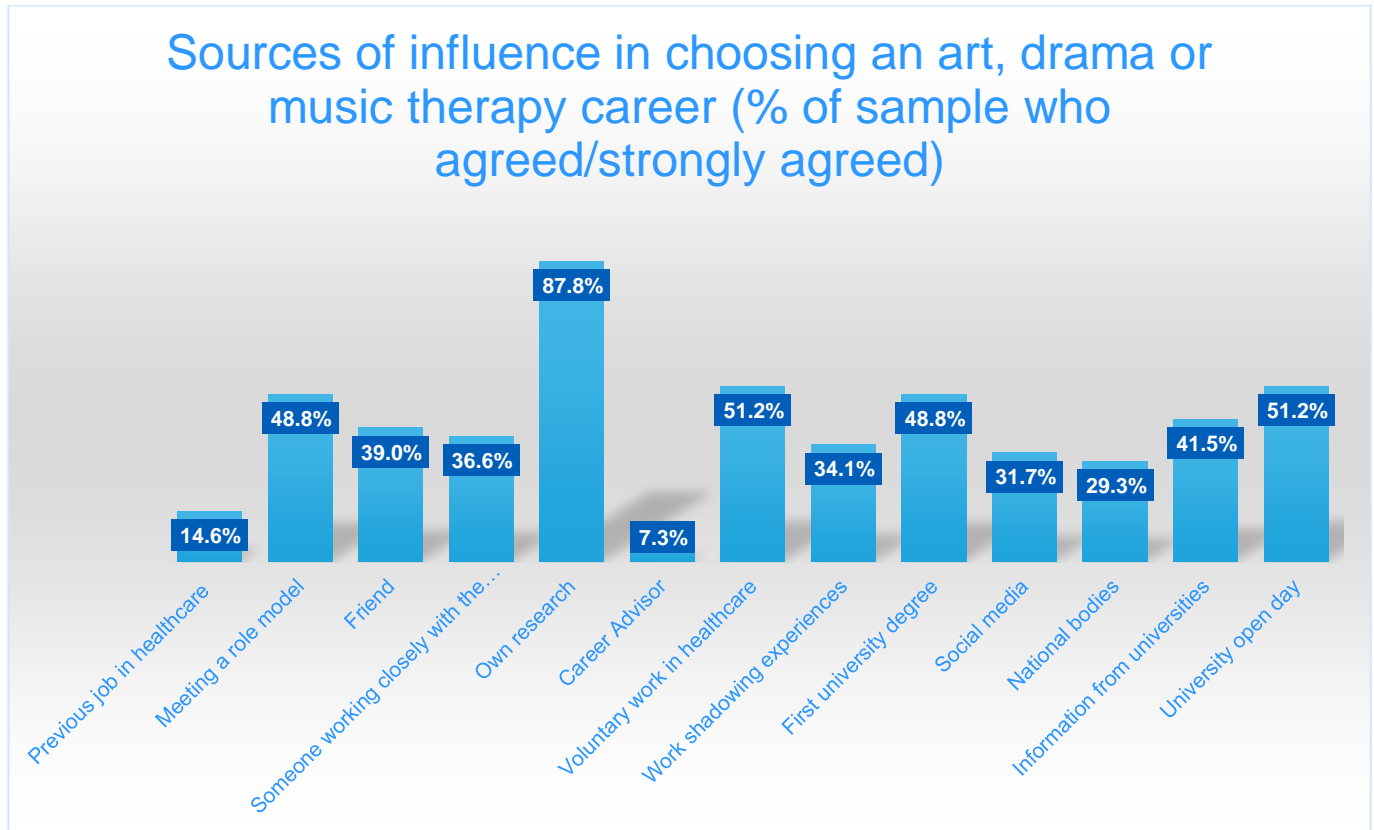


Sources of Influence

Participants were asked about the sources that influenced their career choice.

- The most influential factors were 'conducting my own research' (87.8% of the sample agreed/strongly agreed) and 'Voluntary work in healthcare setting' (51.2%).
- Selected sources of influence are shown in figure below.
- University related sources tended to score higher (e.g. information from university 41.1% and open days 51.1%) than personal sources (e.g. family member 17.1%, friends 39%) and educational sources had the lowest score.
- The impact of meeting an art, drama or music therapist through personal interactions such as 'My own experience of being a patient/a relative receiving care from the profession' was low (12.2%), likewise was the influence from previous job in healthcare (14.6%). 'Meeting someone in the profession who was a really good role model for me' influenced 48.8% of the sample, which emphasises the influence these encounters have on individuals choosing this career. It also highlights the potentially missed opportunity for art, drama and music therapists to act as career ambassadors.
- The low percentage (7.3%) being influenced by career advisors is a concern. In fact, there were no participants who strongly agreed with this sentence. However, this finding may reflect the higher age of the sample, and the majority making the decision to enter this career after their first career or later.
- Exposure to work shadowing did not score highly as an influential factor (34.1% of the sample).
- 31.7% had been influenced by social media. This suggests a possible shift in the influence of different forms of media in promoting the profession.
- It was clear that the overall highest influential factor was doing own research, which suggest that more could be done to highlight and marketing the art, drama and music therapist career.

Art, Drama and Music therapist Career Choices Factsheet



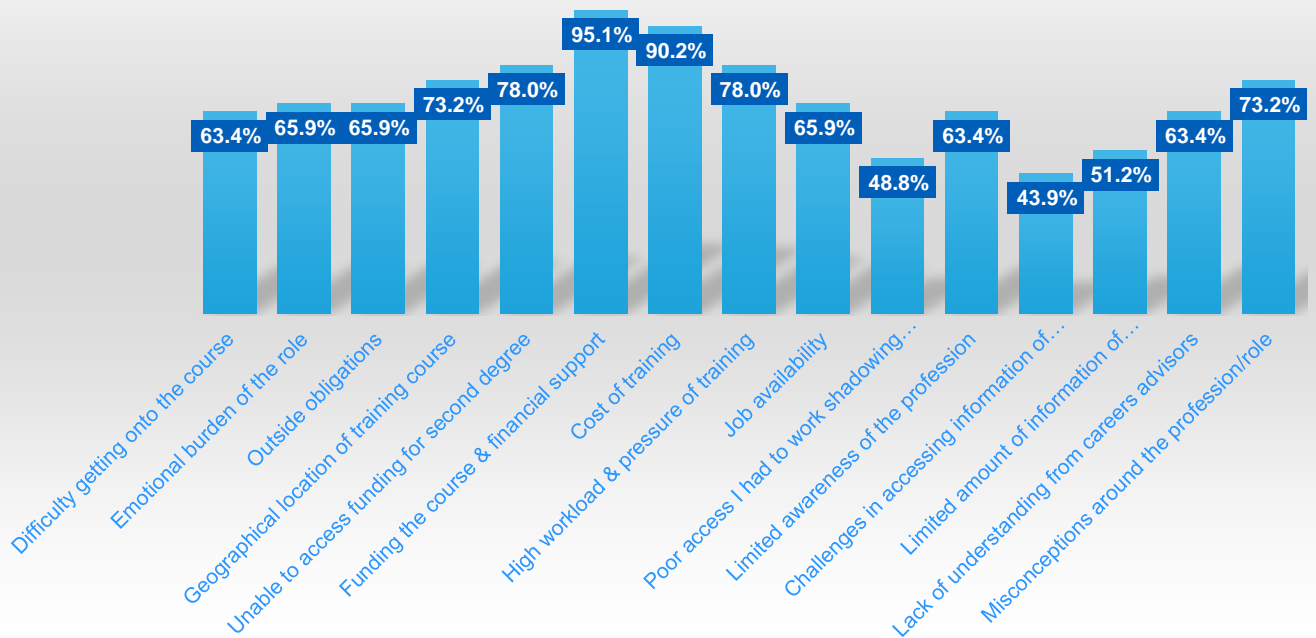
Barriers to entering art, drama or music therapy

Participants were asked how their career choice had been affected by potential barriers to entering an art, drama or music career. The participants recognised barriers and overcame them to still choose this profession.

- The most influential barrier was 'Funding the course and availability of financial support' (95.1% of the sample agreed/strongly agreed with this statement). Followed by 'cost of training whilst undertaking the course' a barrier identified by 90.2%. This is likely a reflection of there being no financial support available for art, drama and music therapy students.
- 73.2% agreed or strongly agreed that the geographical location of the training course was a barrier.
- Most common barriers are shown in the figure below.
- Knowledge of the profession was seen as a barrier by 63.4% and misconception around the profession acted as a barrier for 73.2%. Concerningly, 63.4% agreed a 'lack of understanding from career advisors' was as a barrier to choosing the profession. Moreover, challenges in accessing information of the profession (43.9%) and limited amount of information of the profession were also barriers (51.2%). Additionally, 'poor access to work shadowing' was seen as a barrier by 48.8% of the sample.

Art, Drama and Music therapist Career Choices Factsheet

Barriers in choosing an art, drama or music therapist career (% of sample who agreed/strongly agreed)



Additional findings

Participants were asked what they thought the public perception was of art, drama and music therapy. The question was answered by 54% of respondents. Overall public perception was seen to have a lack of awareness of the profession and as such generally misunderstood.

The profession was seen not seen to respected or understood by the public or other health professionals. As one participant put it 'Art therapy is thought to be all fun and relaxing and being an art therapist is like an art teacher/ and artist, but the public might overlook the psychodynamic background, research and reasoning behind art therapy, and that art therapy can also bring up difficult feelings but it's part of the healing process.'

The above quote described the most common perception stated by most of the participants that art, drama and music therapists provided art lessons or played music in care homes. The misconceptions of this career were mirrored by 55% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with misconceptions around the profession and what it involves which act as a barrier to the pursuit of an art, drama or music therapy career.

Key findings

- Our sample 83% of participants had chosen art, drama and music therapy either during their degree, after their first career or later.
- Having a fulfilling and satisfying career, as well as altruistic reasons were the key motivations for choosing art, drama or music therapy.

Art, Drama and Music therapist Career Choices Factsheet

- Only 17.1% of the sample were aged under 25 years. 36.6% were over 40 years, with 22% being over 51 years.
- Participants' own research was by far the most impactful source of information about these careers, but also information obtained from universities played an important role. There was a general lack of influence from education sources and career advisors, which may reflect the older age groups of the sample.
- Lack of financial support and cost of training were the most influential barriers to choosing art, drama or music therapy. Awareness and lack of access to information about these professional roles were also important barriers.
- The participants felt that the public perception of the profession was as such generally misunderstood and there was a lack of awareness of the profession. The role was seen to be misunderstood in terms of the scope of what art, drama and music therapists do, with most seeing the therapists teaching classes in art, music or drama as opposed to providing psychological interventions and therapies.

Recommendations

- Changes in employment circumstances and priorities because of the Covid-19 pandemic mean that individuals are looking for a career change (Biddle, 2021). Additionally, the number of students entering art, drama and music therapy after a first career is high (61%). Therefore, **marketing targeted at those looking for a career change is key**. This is an area of focus for HEE (HEE, 2020)
- Altruistic reasons were overwhelmingly the most influential motivations for choosing art, drama or music therapy. Therefore, when promoting the profession, **the altruistic aspects of the profession should be emphasised**. However, it is **also important to highlight other motivations, such as self-development and fulfilment, as well as the variety of role**.
- The low impact of educational sources as a source of influence in choosing art, drama or music therapy is troubling, but maybe not unexpected due to the requirement to train at postgraduate level. This also explains the relatively high number of students over the age of 25 joining art, drama and music therapy courses as they had not discovered the profession at school/college. Only, 7.3% of the sample stated that a career advisor had influenced their choice. **This suggests that career advisors at both school and university level need to be engaged to promote the profession to younger people**.
- Social media as a source of influence was influential for 31% of the sample, which is relatively low compared to other professions. This finding suggests an **opportunity to increase marketing via social media and provide accurate representations of what the role comprises to reduce misconceptions**.
- A lack of understanding and awareness of the profession were the main focus of the responses to the question of 'what do you think the public perception of the profession is?' This was especially in relation to the profession being seen as just teaching classes or playing music at care homes, rather than being psychological therapists providing psychological therapies. **It would therefore be beneficial to emphasise the scope of work art, drama and music therapists undertake when promoting the profession**.
- The key barrier perceived to choosing art, drama or music therapy was 'Funding the course and availability of financial support' (95.1% of the sample agreed/strongly agreed with this statement). Followed by 'cost of training whilst undertaking the course' a barrier identified by 90.2%. This is due to no financial support being available for these courses. In turn the lack of financial support led to art, drama and music therapy courses being accessed largely by a

Art, Drama and Music therapist Career Choices Factsheet

white female and middleclass workforce, as this is the demographic who can afford to do the training without financial support. The introduction of the pre-registration apprenticeships provides an opportunity to widen participation and increase the diversity within this workforce. This suggests that **funding is needed and alternative financial support available for art, drama and music therapy students needs to be increased.**

Acknowledgements

This factsheet was produced by Dr Maja Fuglsang Palmer from the University of Winchester utilising the data responses from the Motivations for choosing an Allied Health Profession career questionnaire 2020. Maja was assisted by Dr Rachel Locke, Dr Lucy Wallis, Dr Jed Jerwood, Professor Beverley Harden and Carrie Biddle. For more details, please contact Dr Maja Fuglsang Palmer: Maja.Palmer@winchester.ac.uk

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